Popularly known as the Duck Stamp Act, it required all waterfowl hunters 16 years or older to buy a stamp annually. The revenue generated was originally earmarked for the Department of Agriculture, but 5 years later was transferred to the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to buy or lease waterfowl sanctuaries.

In the years since its enactment, the Federal Duck Stamp Program has become one of the most popular and successful conservation programs ever initiated. Today, some 1.5 million stamps are sold each year, and, as of 2000, Federal Duck Stamps have generated $511 million for the preservation of more than 5 million acres of waterfowl habitat in the United States. Numerous other birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians have similarly prospered because of habitat protection made possible by the program. An estimated one-third of the nation’s endangered and threatened species find food or shelter in refuges preserved by Duck Stamp funds. Moreover, the protected wetlands help dissipate storms, purify water supplies, store flood water, and nourish fish hatchlings important for sport and commercial fishermen.

The Contest

The first Federal Duck Stamp was designed, at President Roosevelt’s request, by Jay N. “Ding” Darling, a nationally known political cartoonist for the Des Moines Register and a noted hunter and wildlife conservationist. In subsequent years, noted wildlife artists were asked to submit designs. The first contest was opened in 1949 to any U.S. artist who wished to enter, and 65 artists submitted a total of 88 design entries in the only art competition of its kind sponsored by the U.S. Government. To select each year’s design, a panel of noted art, waterfowl, and philatelic authorities are appointed by the Secretary of the interior. Winners received no compensation for the work, except a pane of their stamps, but winners may sell prints of their designs, which are sought by hunters, conservationists, and art collectors.

This year’s contest is being held at an earlier date to provide a platform from which to kick off the National Wildlife Refuge Centennial celebration. In 2003, the refuge system will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The contest dates coincide with the 2002 National Wildlife Refuge Week.

The public may view the 2002 Federal Duck Stamp Contest entries on Tuesday, October 15, 2002, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., in the Department of the Interior Auditorium (“C” Street entrance), 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC. This year’s judging will be held Wednesday, October 16, 2002, beginning at 10:30 a.m. and continuing at 9 a.m. on Thursday, October 17, 2002.

Dated: January 22, 2002.

Marshall Jones, Jr.,
Acting Director.

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